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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000735

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SUBJECT: USAU: AFRICA COMMAND DEPUTY MEETS WITH AU PEACE  
AND SECURITY COMMISSIONER LAMAMRA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador Mary Yates, Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities at AFRICOM, met on March 25 with African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security Ramtane Lamamra at AU headquarters. Their discussion centered on the political and security situation in Somalia as well as the role played by AU and Somali security forces in maintaining peace and restoring stability in Somalia. Lamamra and Yates also discussed the Africa Command's potential military cooperation with Libya and the status of the AU's North African Standby Brigade, and they explored whether the U.S. and AU could team up to address another emerging challenge for the AU--maritime security. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Ambassador Yates met AU Peace and Security Commissioner Lamamra a few days after his return from New York where he spent a week at the UN in consultations about Somalia and peacekeeping. It was Yates' second face-to-face meeting with Lamamra since he took office in April 2008. Yates was accompanied by Ambassador Yamamoto, CJTF-HOA Commander Anthony Kurta, and USAU and AFRICOM advisers.

Somalia: Light At The End Of The Tunnel  
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¶3. (C) Lamamra began his review of the situation in Somalia by noting that there had been progress on both the political and military fronts. AMISOM is above the 50 percent mark of its authorized troop strength of 8,000, he said, noting the recent deployment of a third Ugandan battalion. Many challenges remain, such as the UN's adoption of a support package. Once adopted, that support package will still take a few months to implement, Lamamra cautioned, but at least "there is light at the end of the tunnel." For the time being, the AU's priorities are to help develop a Somali security force while AMISOM continues its current mission, he said.

¶4. (C) With regard to AMISOM, Lamamra said he was concerned about an "unhealthy debate" among Islamists over whether AMISOM is a foreign force that they should oppose. Lamamra would urge Somalia's new leaders to demonstrate their leadership by explaining to fellow Somalis that AMISOM is "absolutely necessary for them" at this time. New Somali President Sheikh Sharif has a difficult task, he conceded, but his task will be easier if he brings more clarity to the situation. Lamamra cited recent conflicting statements about the role of peacekeepers made by the Somali prime minister and the ministers of foreign affairs and interior.

¶15. (C) Outside Somalia, it is far less clear whether other AU member states will join Burundi and Uganda in contributing troops to AMISOM, Lamamra said. He was pessimistic about Nigeria committing troops, and an earlier pledge by Malawi has apparently failed. Malawi will send troops to MINURCA instead, he said. Ambassador Yates said it would be encouraging if African countries that had received ACOTA training would agree to contribute peacekeeping troops.

¶16. (C) Turning to the Somali joint security forces, Lamamra underscored the urgent need to equip and pay them. They lack uniforms, food rations, and pay, he said, and there is a concern that if they are not paid, they will simply switch allegiances. Lamamra briefly shared his idea of creating a paramilitary force capable of challenging insurgents, but whatever the nature of the Somali forces, they need outside support.

¶17. (C) Ambassador Yates inquired whether Libyan leader and AU Chairperson Qadhafi had or could speak with Al Shabaab leaders to persuade them not to oppose Sheikh Sharif and the new Somali leadership. Lamamra agreed that Qadhafi could play a positive role. Qadhafi is not an Islamist himself and reportedly scoffed at the idea that every Islamic country should endorse Al Shabaab, Lamamra added.

AFRICOM and North Africa  
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¶18. (C) Yates informed Lamamra of the Africa Command,s Commander General Ward's visit to Libya. Although Qadhafi was in Nouakchott at the time of the visit, the meetings with other Libyan officials were productive and the Africa Command,s military cooperation with Libya appears promising, especially on counter-terrorism, she said. Lamamra noted the professionalism of Libya's CHOD Major General Aoun.

¶19. (C) Yates also inquired about the status of the AU's Northern Brigade. Lamamra reported that the brigade was "catching up" quickly. He said Egypt will provide headquarters for the brigade and contribute one battalion. Algeria has pledged two autonomous battalions and two additional support companies, while Libya is offering helicopter support. Tunisia has signed an MOU, but the nature of its pledge is not yet known, said Lamamra.

Maritime Security  
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¶10. (C) Lamamra reported that the next meeting of Ministers and Chiefs of Defense, scheduled for mid-May, will address maritime security. RDML Kurta offered assistance in maritime strategy development, and stated his command was helping develop a maritime center of excellence in Kenya. He also offered to help draw other foreign partners like Europe and Asia into the effort and help foster sub-regional maritime cooperation. It was agreed that the Command would submit a white paper on Maritime Security needs and possible programs for Lamamra,s consideration for discussion at the May CHOD meeting.

¶11. (C) Ambassador Yates approved this message.  
YAMAMOTO